

# HURRICANE KATRINA UPDATE 5

Date: 8 September 2005

## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY Disaster Recovery Update – Key Messages 8 September 2005

***Reduce Further Fatalities and Save Lives.*** Federal, state and local responders will continue life saving and life sustaining missions by providing ongoing search and rescue, water, food, and medicine, while also taking appropriate actions to prevent exposure, crime and disease. It is important for all residents in New Orleans to evacuate the affected area. All persons found by search and rescue teams will be evacuated as they are found. Unfortunately, there is still much we do not know about the true toll this storm has had on the region, especially on the loss of life. Whatever that number is, it will be devastating to all of us, and our hearts go out to our fellow Americans who have lost loved ones in this terrible tragedy.

***Provide Safe Shelter and Secure Housing Facilities.*** FEMA and the American Red Cross are working with federal and state partners and voluntary organizations to ensure victims of Hurricane Katrina are relocated to safe shelters with life-sustaining commodities. Prior to Hurricane Katrina's landfall, a Housing Area Command was established in Baton Rouge to coordinate temporary and long-term housing. Housing Task Forces continue work to identify long-term housing facilities to assist disaster victims as quickly as possible.

***FEMA Activates Expedited Assistance Program.*** In the interest of helping people get on the road to recovery, FEMA is activating their expedited assistance program to offer immediate aid (\$2,000 per household) to those who have been displaced from their homes as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Affected individuals in declared counties can register online for disaster assistance at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or call FEMA's toll-free registration line 1-800-621-FEMA (3362). FEMA is working to implement different methods to deliver financial assistance, including issuing debit cards, to the thousand of evacuees at the Houston Astrodome and may provide additional cards or alternative delivery means to those individuals placed in other sheltering locations by FEMA.

## **KEY STATISTICS**

- ✓ More than **70,000** response, rescue, recovery and law enforcement personnel are working around the clock to bring critical aid and support to the Gulf Coast region.
- ✓ **253,177** people have been evacuated and safely housed in shelters in **17** states and the District of Columbia.
- ✓ More than **47,000** lives have been saved or rescued to date.
- ✓ More than **37** million liters of water and **17** million MREs distributed by FEMA.
- ✓ **15** Disaster Recovery Centers open in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.
- ✓ **87** National Disaster Medical System Teams engaged in Gulf Region.

## **WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING**

- “As Katrina crossed Florida on Aug. 25, FEMA had already deployed assets in the region. We began moving those search-and-rescue and medical-response teams to forward

locations for a Gulf Coast landfall, in anticipation of requests for help from the governors in the Gulf Coast region. Before the storm's second landfall, President Bush responded to the requests of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi's governors and declared emergencies in the three states — opening the federal assistance pipeline ... We are still fully engaged in disaster response at this critical time. There will be plenty of time for analysis in the future, and we will be our own toughest critics when that day arrives ... Katrina has affected us all. Our entire nation grieves for the victims of Katrina. And we will not rest as long as the people of the gulf states are in need. We will be there for as long as it takes to recover." ("We Are Still Fully Engaged," [USA Today](#), September 8, 2005)

- "The federal government plans to distribute as many as 600,000 debit cards valued at \$2,000 each to help victims of Hurricane Katrina buy food, transportation and other necessities. The concept is to get them some cash in hand which allows them, empowers them, to make their own decisions about what do they need to have to start rebuilding," Michael Brown, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said yesterday. This is the first time the agency has used this means to distribute aid... So far, FEMA has registered more than 319,000 evacuees for its debit cards, the agency said. They must be totally displaced and have no access to income or savings to qualify. Workers will go to shelters to register people, or evacuees can register online or over the phone. The \$2,000 isn't the limit on the aid an evacuee might be entitled to receive, but is a first payment. (Michael Schroeder, "US To Distribute Debit Cards To Help Victims Buy Necessities", [Wall Street Journal](#), 9/8/2005)
- In a decent career, said Lt. Iain McConnell, a pilot might work 10 rescues like that. But in New Orleans, McConnell and other local Coast Guard officers shattered that number almost daily, rescuing survivors continuously from rooftop after rooftop. "We did 33 on our first day out," Lt. j.g. Christopher Stoeckler said Wednesday. McConnell co-piloted a helicopter that hoisted more than 20 people on one of the first days after Hurricane Katrina smashed into the Gulf Coast ... They flew victims to the Louis Armstrong International Airport and other locations ... there have been few complaints about the Coast Guard, which says it rescued more than 12,000 people by air and thousands more by water . "They did a wonderful job," said Joe Myers, a consultant and former statewide emergency management chief for Florida. One writer for the Washington Post, which is not known for lavishing praise on federal agencies, wrote: "Let's have a round of cheers for the U.S. Coast Guard" ... [Lt. Ryan Elissa MacLeod, pilot of a C-130 Hercules] said she got the call to leave for New Orleans just before midnight Aug. 30, the day after the storm hit. She and a crew of seven were flying their C-130 over New Orleans by 2 a.m. Tampa time. ("Rare Helicopter Rescues Become Standard During Relief Effort", [St. Petersburg \(FL\) Times](#), 9/8/2005)
- "Police and troops, backed by the threat of force, coaxed New Orleans' remaining hurricane survivors to leave Wednesday ... In one operation, federal agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency of the Homeland Security Department, evacuated 25 men and women, agency spokesman Michael Keegan said." ("10,000 Survivors Still in City," [USA Today](#), September 8, 2005)
- "People are finding houses. Apartments. Their families. They're moving by the hundreds out of the Astrodome and Houston's three other major shelters, and the facilities' manager suggested Wednesday they could be emptied of hurricane evacuees in less than two weeks. "I don't know if they'd close this weekend. I have a personal goal of the weekend after that," said Coast Guard Lt. Joe Leonard, who supervises the shelters at the Astrodome and the adjacent Reliant Arena and Reliant Center exhibition hall, as well as the downtown George R. Brown Convention Center. He emphasized, "We're not going to close ... until everybody's gone." The population in the four facilities had fallen to 8,096 Wednesday, he said. The Red Cross

estimated a high of 24,950 on Saturday. The decline is because many people have moved into accommodations arranged through one of the 26 area housing authorities working with the hurricane victims. (“Numbers Dwindle At Astrodome as Evacuees Move Out, [USA Today](#), September 8, 2005)